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FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8125
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 5610
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 2876
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 6747
RUEHBW/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 3971
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1319
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 1218
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 3571
RUEHQD/AMEMBASSY QUITO 3956
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 8473
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA 0026
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC
RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 000428

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STATE FOR WHA/AND
TREASURY FOR SGOOCH
ENERGY FOR CDAY AND SLADISLAW

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/17/2016
TAGS: FAID PREL ECON BL
SUBJECT: BIZARRE CUBAN AID ENCOUNTER

Classified By: DCM David Robinson for reasons 1.4d and b.

¶1. (C) Santa Cruz Business Chamber (CAINCO) President Gabriel Dabdoub related to the Ambassador on February 15 a strange encounter he witnessed between President Evo Morales, Santa Cruz Prefect Ruben Costas and Cuban Ambassador to Bolivia Luiz Felipe Vazquez. According to Dabdoub, the Cuban Ambassador crashed a meeting at CAINCO that included Evo Morales and Ruben Costas, said Bolivia could have more Cuban doctors ("another 150, if you want"), and then dug a wad of cash--\$100,000--out of his pocket saying it was for Morales to buy Bolivian products for flood relief.

¶2. (C) Morales, reportedly somewhat taken aback, declined the cash. The Cuban Ambassador then offered it to Ruben Costas, who also declined, saying it was not proper to accept donations in this way. After an awkward moment, the parties agreed that CAINCO would act as custodian for the money and placed it in the Chamber's safe. Subsequently, CAINCO received instructions from the GOB to transfer the funds to one of the Santa Cruz departmental government accounts to be used for food aid.

¶3. (C) Dabdoub also told the Ambassador that his Cuban counterpart earlier had given \$100,000 to the prefect of Beni, a department in northern Bolivia. Although this is the first we have heard about money changing hands, Dabdoub's story tracks with anecdotal reports suggesting growing Cuban presence and activity throughout Bolivia.
GREENLEE